

DEPARTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL



BILL SCHUETTE, ATTORNEY GENERAL

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The Attorney General is a constitutional officer, independently elected by the voters of Michigan. The Attorney General is the chief law enforcement officer and chief legal officer and lawyer for the state. The Office of Attorney General predates statehood, having been established by an 1807 territorial act, and it has been preserved in every constitution of Michigan. The Attorney General establishes the official legal position for the state, and may render opinions on questions of law presented by the governor, legislature, or any other state officer. The opinions of the Attorney General are considered binding on all state agencies and officers unless overturned by a court. The Attorney General provides legal counsel to the executive branch of government, and for each officer, department, board, and commission of state government. The Attorney General provides legal representation in court actions, assists in the conduct of official hearings held by state agencies, and defends the State Constitution.

The Attorney General is also the lawyer for the people of the state of Michigan and may intervene in any lawsuit, criminal or civil, when the interests of the people of the state of Michigan so require. The Attorney General advises and supervises prosecuting attorneys throughout Michigan. The Attorney General also possesses certain investigative powers, including the power to investigate allegations of election fraud and complaints for the removal of public officials. The Attorney General may also request grand jury investigations in criminal matters.

By virtue of the office, the Attorney General is a member of various state boards and commissions, including the State Administrative Board, the State Employees' Retirement System Board, the Judges' Retirement Board, the State Police Retirement System Board, and the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards.

While the Attorney General is responsible for representing the interests of the state as a whole, there is no law that authorizes the Attorney General to provide legal services to private individuals or to appear in court on their behalf.

To assist in the many functions of the department, the Attorney General employs a staff of assistant attorneys general, who must be members of the State Bar of Michigan and who are appointed under Michigan Civil Service Rules. In addition, the Attorney General has a staff of investigators, secretaries, clerical personnel, and paralegals to assist in carrying out the mandate of the office. All of the legal work performed by the assistant attorneys general, including drafting of opinions and legal documents and representation of client agencies, is done in the name of the Attorney General and with the approval of the Attorney General, or the approval of the Attorney General's designee.

The department is organized into 3 bureaus: Criminal Justice, Consumer and Environmental Protection, and Solicitor General. Additionally, the department includes the Prosecuting Attorneys Coordinating Council, an autonomous entity, and the Attorney General serves on its Executive Committee. The Attorney General maintains offices in Lansing, Detroit, and Grand Rapids.



DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS



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The Michigan Civil Rights Commission was created by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 to carry out the guarantees against discrimination articulated in Article I, Section 2. As further stated in Article V, Section 29, the state constitution directs the commission to investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color, or national origin and to “secure the equal protection of such civil rights without such discrimination.” Public Acts 453 and 220 of 1976 and subsequent amendments have added sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, genetic disposition, and physical and mental disabilities to the original four protected categories.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights was established in 1965 to provide a staff complement to the policy-making responsibilities of the commission. In 1991, the department was expanded further. During that year, the Michigan Women’s Commission was transferred from the Department of Management and Budget to this agency by executive order. In April 2011, the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, the Hispanic/Latino Commission and the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing were moved to MCDR, also through executive order.

The Department of Civil Rights enforces the state’s protections against illegal discrimination primarily by investigating discrimination complaints. The department also works to prevent discrimination through programs that promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws and provides information and services to businesses on diversity initiatives, equal employment law, and procurement opportunities. Staff and allies also work to prevent discrimination through statewide educational initiatives on bullying awareness, eradicating hate crimes, increasing community response to incidents, improving the living and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and through the nascent Michigan Leadership Collaborative on Civil and Human Rights.

The department has offices in Marquette, Grand Rapids, Flint, Detroit, and Lansing. A complaint may be filed at any of the department’s offices, if the alleged discrimination has occurred within the past 180 days.

